

**English Language Arts (excerpt)**

Introduction

As specified by CCSSO and NGA, the Standards are (1) research and evidence based, (2) aligned with college and work expectations, (3) rigorous, and (4) internationally benchmarked. A particular standard was included in the document only when the best available evidence indicated that its mastery was essential for college and career readiness in a twenty-first-century, globally competitive society. The Standards are intended to be a living work: as new and better evidence emerges, the Standards will be revised accordingly.

The Standards are an extension of a prior initiative led by CCSSO and NGA to develop College and Career Readiness (CCR) standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language as well as in mathematics. The CCR Reading, Writing, and Speaking and Listening Standards, released in draft form in September 2009, serve, in revised form, as the backbone for the present document. Grade-specific K–12 standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language translate the broad (and, for the earliest grades, seemingly distant) aims of the CCR standards into age- and attainment-appropriate terms.

The Standards set requirements not only for English language arts (ELA) but also for literacy in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. Just as students must learn to read, write, speak, listen, and use language effectively in a variety of content areas, so too must the Standards specify the literacy skills and understandings required for college and career readiness in multiple disciplines. Literacy standards for grade 6 and above are predicated on teachers of ELA, history/social studies, science, and technical subjects using their content area expertise to help students meet the particular challenges of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language in their respective fields. It is important to note that the 6–12 literacy standards in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects are not meant to replace content standards in those areas but rather to supplement them. States may incorporate these standards into their standards for those subjects or adopt them as content area literacy standards.

As a natural outgrowth of meeting the charge to define college and career readiness, the Standards also lay out a vision of what it means to be a literate person in the twenty-first century. Indeed, the skills and understandings students are expected to demonstrate have wide applicability outside the classroom or workplace. Students who meet the Standards readily undertake the close, attentive reading that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature. They habitually perform the critical reading necessary to pick carefully through the staggering amount of information available today in print and digitally. They actively seek the wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens worldviews. They reflexively demonstrate the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is essential to both private deliberation and responsible citizenship in a democratic republic. In short, students who meet the Standards develop the skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening that are the foundation for any creative and purposeful expression in language.

What is **Not** Covered by the Standards

The Standards should be recognized for what they are not as well as what they are. The most important intentional design limitations are as follows:

1. The Standards define what all students are expected to know and be able to do, not how teachers should teach. For instance, the use of play with young children is not specified by the Standards, but it is welcome as a valuable activity in its own right and as a way to help students meet the expectations in this document. Furthermore, while the Standards make references to some particular forms of content, including mythology, foundational U.S. documents, and Shakespeare, they do not—indeed, cannot—enumerate all or even most of the content that students should learn. The Standards must therefore be complemented by a well-developed, content-rich curriculum consistent with the expectations laid out in this document.
2. While the Standards focus on what is most essential, they do not describe all that can or shouldbe taught. A great deal is left to the discretion of teachers and curiculum developers. The aim of the Standards is to articulate the fundamentals, not to set out an exhaustive list or a set of restrictions that limits what can be taught beyond what is specified herein.
3. The Standards do not define the nature of advanced work for students who meet the Standards prior to the end of high school. For those students, advanced work in such areas as literature, composition, language, and journalism should be available. This work should provide the next logical step up from the college and career readiness baseline established here.
4. The Standards set grade-specific standards but do not define the intervention methods or materials necessary to support students who are well below or well above grade-level expectations. No set of grade-specific standards can fully reflect the great variety in abilities, needs, learning rates, and achievement levels of students in any given classroom. However, the Standards do provide clear signposts along the way to the goal of college and career readiness for all students.
5. It is also beyond the scope of the Standards to define the full range of supports appropriate for English language learners and for students with special needs. At the same time, all students must have the opportunity to learn and meet the same high standards if they are to access the knowledge and skills necessary in their post–high school lives.

Each grade will include students who are still acquiring English. For those students, it is possible to meet the standards in reading, writing, speaking, and listening without displaying native-like control of conventions and vocabulary.

The Standards should also be read as allowing for the widest possible range of students to participate fully from the outset and as permitting appropriate accommodations to ensure maximum participation of students with special education needs. For example, for students with disabilities *reading* should allow for the use of Braille, screen-reader technology, or other assistive devices, while *writing* should include the use of a scribe, computer, or speech-to-text technology. In a similar vein, *speaking* and *listening* should be interpreted broadly to include sign language.

1. While the ELA and content area literacy components described herein are critical to college and career readiness, they do not define the whole of such readiness. Students require a wide-ranging, rigorous academic preparation and, particularly in the early grades, attention to such matters as social, emotional, and physical development and approaches to learning. Similarly, the Standards define literacy expectations in history/social studies, science, and technical subjects, but literacy standards in other areas, such as mathematics and health education, modeled on those in this document are strongly encouraged to facilitate a comprehensive, schoolwide literacy program.

Students Who are College and Career Ready in Reading, Writing,  
Speaking, Listening, and Language

The descriptions that follow are not standards themselves but instead offer a portrait of students who meet the standards set out in this document. As students advance through the grades and master the standards in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language, they are able to exhibit with increasing fullness and regularity these capacities of the literate individual.

* **They demonstrate independence.**

Students can, without significant scaffolding, comprehend and evaluate complex texts across a range of types and disciplines, and they can construct effective arguments and convey intricate or multifaceted information. Likewise, students are able independently to discern a speaker’s key points, request clarification, and ask relevant questions. They build on others’ ideas, articulate their own ideas, and confirm they have been understood. Without prompting, they demonstrate command of standard English and acquire and use a wide-ranging vocabulary. More broadly, they become self-directed learners, effectively seeking out and using resources to assist them, including teachers, peers, and print and digital reference materials.

* **They build strong content knowledge.**

Students establish a base of knowledge across a wide range of subject matter by engaging with works of quality and substance. They become proficient in new areas through research and study. They read purposefully and listen attentively to gain both general knowledge and discipline-specific expertise. They refine and share their knowledge through writing and speaking.

* **They respond to the varying demands of audience, task, purpose, and discipline.**

Students adapt their communication in relation to audience, task, purpose, and discipline. They set and adjust purpose for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use as warranted by the task. They appreciate nuances, such as how the composition of an audience should affect tone when speaking and how the connotations of words affect meaning. They also know that different disciplines call for different types of evidence (e.g., documentary evidence in history, experimental evidence in science).

* **They comprehend as well as critique.**

Students are engaged and open-minded—but discerning—readers and listeners. They work diligently to understand precisely what an author or speaker is saying, but they also question an author’s or speaker’s assumptions and premises and assess the veracity of claims and the soundness of reasoning.

* **They value evidence.**

Students cite specific evidence when offering an oral or written interpretation of a text. They use relevant evidence when supporting their own points in writing and speaking, making their reasoning clear to the reader or listener, and they constructively evaluate others’ use of evidence.

* **They use technology and digital media strategically and capably.**

Students employ technology thoughtfully to enhance their reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language use. They tailor their searches online to acquire useful information efficiently, and they integrate what they learn using technology with what they learn offline. They are familiar with the strengths and limitations of various technological tools and mediums and can select and use those best suited to their communication goals.

* **They come to understand other perspectives and cultures.**

Students appreciate that the twenty-first-century classroom and workplace are settings in which people from often widely divergent cultures and who represent diverse experiences and perspectives must learn and work together. Students actively seek to understand other perspectives and cultures through reading and listening, and they are able to communicate effectively with people of varied backgrounds. They evaluate other points of view critically and constructively. Through reading great classic and contemporary works of literature representative of a variety of periods, cultures, and worldviews, students can vicariously inhabit worlds and have experiences much different than their own.

**Key Features of the Standards**

**READING**

***Reading: Text complexity and the growth of comprehension***

The Reading standards place equal emphasis on the sophistication of what students read and the skill with which they read. Standard 10 defines a grade-by-grade “staircase” of increasing text complexity that rises from beginning reading to the college and career readiness level. Whatever they are reading, students must also show a steadily growing ability to discern more from and make fuller use of text, including making an increasing number of connections among ideas and between texts, considering a wider range of textual evidence, and becoming more sensitive to inconsistencies, ambiguities, and poor reasoning in texts.

**Note on range and content of student** reading

To become college and career ready, students must grapple with works of exceptional craft and thought whose range extends across genres, cultures, and centuries. Such works offer profound insights into the human condition and serve as models for students’ own thinking and writing. Along with high-quality contemporary works, these texts should be chosen from among seminal U.S. documents, the classics of American literature, and the timeless dramas of Shakespeare. Through wide and deep reading of literature and literary nonfiction of steadily increasing sophistication, students gain a reservoir of literary and cultural knowledge, references, and images; the ability to evaluate intricate arguments; and the capacity to surmount the challenges posed by complex texts.

*Key Ideas and Details*

**1.** Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

**2.** Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.

**3.** Analyze how and why individuals, events, and ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.

*Craft and Structure*

**4.** Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.

**5.** Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.

**6.** Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.

*Integration of Knowledge and Ideas*

**7.** Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.\*

**8.** Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.

**9.** Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

*Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity*

1. Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently.

**WRITING**

***Writing: Text types, responding to reading, and research***

The Standards acknowledge the fact that whereas some writing skills, such as the ability to plan, revise, edit, and publish, are applicable to many types of writing, other skills are more properly defined in terms of specific writing types: arguments, informative/explanatory texts, and narratives. Standard 9 stresses the importance of the writing-reading connection by requiring students to draw upon and write about evidence from literary and informational texts. Because of the centrality of writing to most forms of inquiry, research standards are prominently included in this strand, though skills important to research are infused throughout the document.

Note on range and content of student writing

For students, writing is a key means of asserting and defending claims, showing what they know about a subject, and conveying what they have experienced, imagined, thought, and felt. To be college- and career- ready writers, students must take task, purpose, and audience into careful consideration, choosing words, information, structures, and formats deliberately. They need to know how to combine elements of different kinds of writing—for example, to use narrative strategies within argument and explanation within narrative—to produce complex and nuanced writing. They need to be able to use technology strategically when creating, refining, and collaborating on writing. They have to become adept at gathering information, evaluating sources, and citing material accurately, reporting findings from their research and analysis of sources in a clear and cogent manner. They must have the flexibility, concentration, and fluency to produce high-quality first-draft text under a tight deadline as well as the capacity to revisit and make improvements to a piece of writing over multiple drafts when circumstances encourage or require it.

*Text Types and Purposes\**

**1.** Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

**2.** Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

**3.** Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, well-chosen details, and well-structured event sequences.

*Production and Distribution of Writing*

**4.** Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**5.** Develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.

**6.** Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and to interact and collaborate with others.

*Research to Build and Present Knowledge*

**7.** Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

**8.** Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, assess the credibility and accuracy of each source, and integrate the information while avoiding plagiarism.

**9.** Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

*Range of Writing*

**10.** Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

\*These broad types of writing include many subgenres. See Appendix A for definitions of key writing types.

**SPEAKING & LISTENING**

***Speaking and Listening:  
Flexible communication and collaboration***

Including but not limited to skills necessary for formal presentations, the Speaking and Listening standards require students to develop a range of broadly useful oral communication and interpersonal skills. Students must learn to work together, express and listen carefully to ideas, integrate information from oral, visual, quantitative, and media sources, evaluate what they hear, use media and visual displays strategically to help achieve communicative purposes, and adapt speech to context and task.

Note on range and content of student speaking and listening

To become college and career ready, students must have ample opportunities to take part in a variety of rich, structured conversations—as part of a whole class, in small groups, and with a partner—built around important content in various domains. They must be able to contribute appropriately to these conversations, to make comparisons and contrasts, and to analyze and synthesize a multitude of ideas in accordance with the standards of evidence appropriate to a particular discipline. Whatever their intended major or profession, high school graduates will depend heavily on their ability to listen attentively to others so that they are able to build on others’ meritorious ideas while expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

New technologies have broadened and expanded the role that speaking and listening play in acquiring and sharing knowledge and have tightened their link to other forms of communication. The Internet has accelerated the speed at which connections between speaking, listening, reading, and writing can be made, requiring that students be ready to use these modalities nearly simultaneously. Technology itself is changing quickly, creating a new urgency for students to be adaptable in response to change.

*Comprehension and Collaboration*

**1.** Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

**2.** Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

**3.** Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric.

*Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas*

**4.** Present information, findings, and supporting evidence such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

**5.** Make strategic use of digital media and visual displays of data to express information and enhance understanding of presentations.

**6.** Adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks, demonstrating command of formal English when indicated or appropriate.

**LANGUAGE**

***Language: Conventions, effective use, and vocabulary***

The Language standards include the essential “rules” of standard written and spoken English, but they also approach language as a matter of craft and informed choice among alternatives. The vocabulary standards focus on understanding words and phrases, their relationships, and their nuances and on acquiring new vocabulary, particularly general academic and domain-specific words and phrases.

Note on range and content of student language use

To be college and career ready in language, students must have firm control over the conventions of standard English. At the same time, they must come to appreciate that language is as at least as much a matter of craft as of rules and be able to choose words, syntax, and punctuation to express themselves and achieve particular functions and rhetorical effects. They must also have extensive vocabularies, built through reading and study, enabling them to comprehend complex texts and engage in purposeful writing about and conversations around content. They need to become skilled in determining or clarifying the meaning of words and phrases they encounter, choosing flexibly from an array of strategies to aid them. They must learn to see an individual word as part of a network of other words—words, for example, that have similar denotations but different connotations. The inclusion of Language standards in their own strand should not be taken as an indication that skills related to conventions, effective language use, and vocabulary are unimportant to reading, writing, speaking, and listening; indeed, they are inseparable from such contexts.

*Conventions of Standard English*

**1.** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.

**2.** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.

*Knowledge of Language*

**3.** Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style, and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.

*Vocabulary Acquisition and Use*

**4.** Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts, and consulting general and specialized reference materials, as appropriate.

**5.** Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships and nuances in word meanings.

**6.** Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking, and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.